# Scottish Government commits to exclusion policy amid rising school violence and social media challenges



# Addressing Disruptive Behaviour in Scottish Schools: Government's Commitment Amid Rising Concerns

Recent discussions in the Scottish Parliament have highlighted growing apprehensions regarding the management of disruptive behaviour in schools. Education Secretary Jenny Gilruth reiterated that "exclusion does remain an option" for teachers facing violent pupils, a statement that comes in response to calls from various stakeholders for clearer guidelines and support in handling such incidents. The emphasis on maintaining a structured approach is particularly relevant in a climate where incidents of violence and abuse among students have come under scrutiny.

In her address, Ms Gilruth underscored the importance of implementing updated guidance for educators on addressing a spectrum of troublesome behaviours, such as inappropriate mobile phone usage and incidents of violence shared on social media. She expressed particular concern about the online influences contributing to gender-based violence and the broader implications for societal behaviour reflected in Scottish classrooms. “Our classrooms... can act to hold up a mirror to who we are as a society. We should not divorce wider societal shifts from behaviour in Scotland’s schools”, she stated, accentuating the need for holistic educational approaches that align with evolving societal norms.

However, the government's action plan, which aims to tackle disruptive behaviour through a multi-year strategy, has faced criticism from opposition members. Conservative MSP Miles Briggs articulated concerns that many educators and parents were unaware of the initiatives being pursued. His sentiments were echoed by Scottish Labour MSP Pam Duncan-Glancy, who labelled the efforts as "too little, too late." These comments reflect a frustration that some teachers feel overwhelmed and unsupported, particularly given recent findings from the Behaviour in Scottish Schools Research (BISSR). This research revealed that approximately a third of teachers reported experiencing verbal abuse within the past week, with more alarming statistics indicating 16% faced physical aggression.

The plan announced by the Scottish Government—spanning from 2024 to 2027—proposes a comprehensive framework that not only addresses violent incidents but also encompasses various forms of disruption, including mobile phone distractions and the rising prevalence of misogyny. The commitment to foster a safer school environment intends to reduce instances of violence and establish a foundation for positive relationships within educational settings. This strategic approach aligns with findings that female educators are disproportionately affected by violent behaviour, with a union survey indicating that nearly half reported experiencing physical abuse.

In addition to behavioural disruptions, the Scottish Government has prioritised addressing gender-based violence in schools, considering it an intrinsic part of the broader effort to create a respectful and inclusive educational environment. This initiative is encapsulated in the 'Preventing and Responding to Gender Based Violence: A Whole School Framework', developed in collaboration with Rape Crisis Scotland and Zero Tolerance. The framework aims to equip schools with the resources necessary to foster a culture of equality and respect. As reported, this commitment extends beyond mere policy creation; it includes active engagement from students through programmes like the Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) initiative.

The challenges posed by social media also feature prominently in the discourse on school behaviour. Recent discussions have highlighted how platforms can amplify harmful ideologies, normalising misogyny and aggressive behaviour among youths. This sentiment was echoed in an Education Scotland podcast, which noted the dramatic rise in misogynistic content shared on platforms like TikTok. The need for a "healthy digital approach" to education is increasingly recognised as essential for addressing these societal challenges.

Despite a structured action plan and a commitment to ongoing dialogue, scepticism remains regarding the government's progress in curbing disruptive behaviour in schools. As SNP MSP Kenneth Gibson pointed out, pupils often act with a sense of impunity, as there seem to be "few if any tangible consequences" for their actions. The promise of updated guidance on consequences for misbehaviour signifies a move towards rectifying this issue, with expectations set for its release by the upcoming Autumn term.

In conclusion, while the Scottish Government's efforts to tackle disruptive behaviour in classrooms appear robust on paper, the reality reflects a complex interplay of societal influences, teacher support, and student accountability. A collective approach among educators, parents, and students is vital to create an environment where learning can thrive, free from the shadows of violence and disrespect.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/25148559.government-promises-exclusion-remain-option-schools/?ref=rss), [[2]](https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-action-plan-relationships-behaviour-schools-2024-2027/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/25148559.government-promises-exclusion-remain-option-schools/?ref=rss), [[3]](https://www.gov.scot/publications/preventing-responding-gender-based-violence-whole-school-framework/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/25148559.government-promises-exclusion-remain-option-schools/?ref=rss), [[5]](https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/pupil-behaviour-scottish-schools-plan)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/25148559.government-promises-exclusion-remain-option-schools/?ref=rss), [[6]](https://www.equallysafeatschool.org.uk/about-national-framework/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[4]](https://education.gov.scot/news/new-podcast-examines-the-link-between-social-media-and-misogyny/), [[7]](https://news.stv.tv/east-central/pupils-helping-to-tackle-gender-based-violence-in-scottish-schools)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/25148559.government-promises-exclusion-remain-option-schools/?ref=rss), [[2]](https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-action-plan-relationships-behaviour-schools-2024-2027/)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/25148559.government-promises-exclusion-remain-option-schools/?ref=rss> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-action-plan-relationships-behaviour-schools-2024-2027/> - The Scottish Government's 'National Action Plan on Relationships and Behaviour in Schools 2024 to 2027' outlines a comprehensive strategy to address various behavioral issues in schools. The plan emphasizes setting clear national expectations for promoting positive relationships and behavior, supporting local application of national policy, and reducing violence and significant disruptive behavior. It also focuses on engaging the whole-school community and tracking impact and progress. The plan aims to create safe and consistent environments in schools by implementing evidence-based approaches and fostering a culture of collaboration among educators, parents, and students.
3. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/preventing-responding-gender-based-violence-whole-school-framework/> - The 'Preventing and Responding to Gender Based Violence: A Whole School Framework' provides guidance for schools to address gender-based violence (GBV). Developed by the Scottish Government in collaboration with Rape Crisis Scotland and Zero Tolerance, the framework emphasizes a whole-school approach to prevent and respond to GBV. It includes understanding GBV and its impacts, universal and targeted approaches to prevention, and monitoring and evaluation strategies. The framework aims to support schools in creating a culture of equality, respect, and trust, ensuring that all members of the school community are equipped to recognize and respond to GBV.
4. <https://education.gov.scot/news/new-podcast-examines-the-link-between-social-media-and-misogyny/> - Education Scotland released a podcast discussing the link between social media use and misogyny among pupils. The episode features Angela MacDonald from the Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) programme and Dr. Kaitlyn Regehr from University College London. They explore how social media algorithms amplify extreme content and normalize harmful ideologies. The conversation highlights findings from a study showing a fourfold increase in misogynistic content on TikTok's 'For You' page over five days. The podcast underscores the need for a healthy digital approach to education to support young people, schools, and the community.
5. <https://www.tes.com/magazine/news/general/pupil-behaviour-scottish-schools-plan> - In response to concerning findings from the Behaviour in Scottish Schools Research (BISSR), Education Secretary Jenny Gilruth announced a five-point plan to address behavioral issues in Scottish schools. The plan includes developing a national action plan in partnership with key stakeholders, ensuring school inspections document an accurate picture of behavior, providing £900,000 for staff training, improving reporting of inappropriate behavior, and launching a gender-based violence in schools framework. The initiative aims to tackle emerging trends such as in-school truancy, vaping, disruptive mobile phone use, and misogyny.
6. <https://www.equallysafeatschool.org.uk/about-national-framework/> - The 'Preventing and Responding to Gender Based Violence: A Whole School Framework' is a comprehensive guidance resource for schools, published by the Scottish Government in 2024. Developed by a working group co-chaired by the Scottish Government, Rape Crisis Scotland, and Zero Tolerance, the framework provides guidance on how schools can use education to challenge societal views that normalize gender-based violence (GBV). It includes testimony from young people and staff and aims to support schools in creating a positive culture where GBV is not tolerated.
7. <https://news.stv.tv/east-central/pupils-helping-to-tackle-gender-based-violence-in-scottish-schools> - Pupils across Scotland are participating in the Mentors in Violence Programme (MVP), a scheme aimed at tackling gender-based violence in schools. Developed by Education Scotland in 2011, the MVP is now implemented in 210 schools across 30 local authorities. At West Calder High School in West Lothian, fourth-year pupils mentor first-year students, teaching them about relationships and issues related to gender-based violence. The program covers topics such as sexting, controlling behavior, coercive control, domestic abuse, and consent, providing students with a platform to discuss these issues openly.